

Edna's awakening in the awakening novel

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, Edna's awakening and how it affects her is an example of situational irony. Situational irony is when something occurs that is unexpected and does not follow an assumed outcome. Throughout this novella, Edna Pontellier makes an attempt to discover herself in many distinct aspects of her own being.

She grows cold and distant to her husband and children as she focuses on herself completely. She has multiple affairs with Mr. Pontellier and eventually ends up living on her own after buying herself an apartment. Most readers would be left believing that Edna would be satisfied with discovering herself in being that she spends all of her time within the novella trying to do so. Most would believe that this independent-minded woman with radical thinking for her time would find it easy to have peace in knowing that she did not have to rely on anyone but herself for it. But, in the long run, Edna ends up being dissatisfied with her discoveries. She finds herself upset with the fact that she struggles to care for her children and love her own husband. These discoveries eventually lead her to kill herself. While there are other smaller instances of irony in the novella such as instances of verbal irony, this is by far the most ironic part of the story.

Contents

In *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, the character of Edna Pontellier can be considered dynamic. A dynamic character is defined as a character that undergoes a change in personality or perspective throughout the course of a story. Their counterpart is the static character. A static character remains unchanged throughout a story in most/every aspect. At the start of the

novella, Edna was submissive to her husband. She was his obedient prized possession; she did all that he asked of her even if she did not believe he asked of her was necessary. A good example of this is in Chapter 3 (pg. 7), stating Mr. Pontellier returned to his wife the information that Raoul had a high fever and needed looking after Mrs. Pontellier was quite sure Raoul had no fever Even though Edna was sure that her son did not have a fever because he held no symptoms and did not complain of anything before he went off to bed, she still went to check on Raoul simply because her husband had told her to. But as the story progresses, the once obedient Edna grows to defy the commands of her husband. In Chapter 11 (pg. 42), Edna refuses to return inside when her husband calls for her. She does not just say no either; she boldly turns him down, stating, Leonce, go to bed I mean to stay out here. I don't wish to go in, and I don't intend to. Don't speak to me like that again; I shall not answer you. This is a drastic change in personality in comparison to how she was just a few chapters early in the story. She is more independent and outspoken than she had ever been. Along with not submitting to her husband's commands, Edna has also gone from being a half decent mother completely isolating herself from her family. She went from doing the tasks that most mothers of that time were accustomed to doing to living away from home and cheating on her husband.

Throughout *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, Edna Pontellier gradually isolates herself both mentally and physically from her family, especially her husband. Although Edna seems to be quick to push Robert away at the beginning of the story, she begins to grow closer to him during her awakening. At the beginning of the novella, Mrs. Pontellier was loyal to her

husband, regardless of what he demanded of her. She followed whatever he told her to do, even if she knew that nothing would come from his requests. An example of this (as previously stated) is in Chapter 3 when Mr. Pontellier asks Edna to go and check on their son, Raoul, because he believes that he has a fever. Edna does so even though she knows for sure that Raoul could not possibly have a fever. As the novella progresses, she starts to recognize her true feelings for Robert and easily strays away from Mr. Pontellier and their marriage. In Chapter 13 (pg. 50-51), Edna speaks of how she has fallen asleep for a long time and has awoken to a world where it is just her and Robert, stating, "How many years have I slept? The whole island seems changed. Although nothing has physically changed, Edna's state of mind has." This quote allows the reader to clearly see that Edna has changed mentally, for better or for worse. She has changed from an obedient, robot-minded wife to a self-discovery obsessed woman who is completely hooked on another man that she is willing to forget the world for him.

In *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, Chapter 17 proves itself to be important as it shows further character development of both Mrs. and Mr. Pontellier. The chapter begins with Mr. Pontellier returning home for dinner. He expects for his wife to tell him of her reception day only to find that she had spent the day out instead of abiding by her normal duties. Again, this scene shows Edna's progressive and more blatant defiance of her husband's wishes. The interaction between the two is quite reminiscent of how a rebellious teen might interact with their parents. Mr. Pontellier seems more confused than upset at Edna. Mrs. Pontellier does not give him a reason to why she left. She simply states that she just wanted to go out: like a defiant child rebelling just

to rebel. One of the more important parts of this chapter though, following the interaction scene between Edna and Mr. Pontellier, is Edna's tantrum. After Mr. Pontellier heads off to the club, Edna returns to her room. It states, Once she stopped, and taking off her wedding ring, flung it upon the carpet. When she saw it lying there, she stamped her heel upon it, striving to crush it. But her small boot heel did not make an indenture, not a mark upon the little glittering circlet (pg. 71). This scene is very important in the discovery of Edna's character specifically. It makes it clear to the reader that Edna will not be able to leave her marriage to be with Robert so easily. This is shown through Edna's inability to destroy her wedding ring as easily as she did her handkerchief and a glass vase.

The most respected of social classes in Louisiana (specifically the New Orleans area) at the time was that of the French Creoles. This upper class group of people were descendants of wealthy French settlers. They were thought of highly even though when, looking back at them now, many can recognize that how they treated women was unacceptable. The French Creoles of Louisiana were respected for their upkeep. They held what was considered to be perfect families at the time: a stay at home wife, disciplined children, and of course, a husband who left his wife to do most everything. Women were to be married as soon as possible. Typically these marriages were forced and held no love with the women being treated as just a necessary aspect in creating a perfect Creole family. Once married, they were left to complete a multitude of daily tasks in their new homes such as devote their lives to their husbands and children, obey every and all commands given by their husbands, take up appealing hobbies and much

more. Women were encouraged to keep their feelings, specifically negative and thought-provoking ones, buried deep down within them for the better of their families. So, in my opinion, I agree with Edna wanting to isolate and distance herself from her Creole lifestyle. Although she tends to be a bit brash when it comes to how she rebels against the Creole way of life, it is understandable to why she reacted in such a way. No one deserves to be repressed in such a manner. Women deserve just as much respect as men, especially in context to the Creoles. In their society, women do so much but get so little in return.